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THURSDAY
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Cicirelli delays announcement on judge's race

BY DARRELL CLEM
STAFF WRITER

Mayor Sandra Cicirelli strongly indicated Wednesday that she will campaign this year to become Westland's next district judge.

"I'm giving it serious consideration," she said.

Cicirelli is widely expected to run for the job after longtime 18th District Judge Gail McKnight confirmed last week that she will not seek another six-year term.

Cicirelli just began her second four-year term as mayor in January.

"When I ran for re-election last year, I didn't realize that this opportunity would present itself," she said

Wednesday. "It certainly is an opportunity that I have to consider taking. It's an opportunity of a lifetime, and it's something I've always wanted."

Cicirelli indicated that she won't officially announce her decision until after she delivers her State of the City address April 12 — just 20 days before the filing deadline for the district court race.

McKnight last week mentioned Cicirelli and Assistant City Attorney Mark McConnell as "outstanding possible candidates" to replace her on the bench next Jan. 1.

Cicirelli ran unsuccessfully against Westland's other district judge, C. Charles Bokos, in 1994. That is the only local election that Cicirelli, a former city council member, has ever lost.

On Tuesday, McConnell said he will not campaign against Cicirelli if she seeks McKnight's position. However, Bokos' position will be on the ballot in 2008 because he will be over 70 years old and, by state law, can't run for re-election due to his age.

"I'm very honored and humbled to have been strongly encouraged by both Judge McKnight and Judge Bokos to replace one of them," McConnell said. "I think at this time, the best person for Judge McKnight's position would be the mayor. However, if she does not run, I absolutely will."

Rumors have been widespread that McKnight would step aside after serving nearly 22 years as judge. Likewise, Cicirelli has been widely rumored as a potential judicial candidate.

"Both judges have come to me and urged me to do it," Cicirelli said Wednesday.

Cicirelli won a landslide victory last November for a new mayoral term. She would leave office with three years remaining on her term, if elected as district judge.

City Clerk Eileen DeHart confirmed Wednesday that, according to the city charter, council President William Wild would replace Cicirelli as mayor. DeHart said Wild would be in line for the mayoral job until the next city elections in 2007.

Some political observers have speculated that Wild would serve the remaining three years of Cicirelli's term — without a mayoral election. But DeHart said her research has shown that voters would choose a mayor in November of next year to fulfill the final two years of Cicirelli's term.

On Wednesday, Wild said that if Cicirelli leaves the mayoral job, he would be willing to take on the job.

"If there came to be an opening in the office while serving as council president, I would be prepared to accept the duties of the mayor position," he said.

PLEASE SEE JUDGE, A3



TOM HAWLEY | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Show business

Gideon Ault plays Frank Butler and Kristina Monty is Annie Oakley in the Wayne Memorial High School weekend production of "Annie Get Your Gun." For more on the play, see page A3.

Archdiocese plan includes closing of Westland church

BY SUE MASON
STAFF WRITER

The number of Catholic parishes in Westland will be shrinking following an announcement that St. Bernardine of Siena should close upon the pastor's retirement in 2011.

"At least we'll be open until I'm 70," said the Rev. Salvino Briffa, pastor of St. Bernardine. "After that, I don't know. If I'm healthy, I might remain a few more years after that."

The closing is part of a plan

unveiled Wednesday morning by Cardinal Adam Maida and representatives of the archdiocese. The plan is in response to the pressures of shifting population, changing demographics and a diminishing pool of available priests in the Archdiocese of Detroit.

Briffa is 65 years old and said he might retire at 70. Even so, he said it's possible he could be transferred, if he stays beyond that age.

St. Bernardine parish is small, with 450 families, and that.

PLEASE SEE CHURCH, A8

City seeks grants for soccer complex

BY DARRELL CLEM
STAFF WRITER

Westland city leaders, trying to get money for a soccer complex, are hoping that Lansing will kick a \$202,000 grant this way.

Denied a state grant three times, local officials are hopeful that the fourth try will be the charm in seeking soccer funds from the Michigan Department of Natural Resources.

The grant would boost the Kicks 4 Kids campaign, aimed at raising enough money to build three soccer fields at Curtis Woods Park, on Palmer Road between Newburgh and Wayne.

The city would have to raise \$70,980 to match the \$202,000 state grant. Local fund-raisers already have netted nearly \$34,000, said Westland Parks and

The grant would boost the Kicks 4 Kids campaign, aimed at raising enough money to build three soccer fields at Curtis Woods Park, on Palmer Road between Newburgh and Wayne.

Recreation Director Robert Kosowski. Local officials want to install soccer fields, bathrooms, an irrigation system and a pump house at Curtis Woods Park. The local soccer association is in dire need of the playing fields, Kosowski said.

"We deserve this for sure," he said. Lansing has been kind to Westland by granting three grants in seven years for improvements to three local parks —

Central City, Corrado and Merriman parks.

"They've been great," Kosowski said. "I'm not knocking them."

City officials expect to know by August whether the latest state grant application will be approved. If it is, Kosowski said the soccer complex could be ready for play by August of 2007.

Curtis Woods Park is now used for soccer practice, but local officials and soccer enthusiasts have long said that children need an organized complex where they can play their game and host events.

Kosowski credited Mayor Sandra Cicirelli for continuing to push for a grant to build the soccer complex.

"She has really spearheaded this," he said.

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Fire officials offer reward in arson fire

BY DARRELL CLEM
STAFF WRITER

Westland fire officials this week announced a reward of up to \$5,000 for information that helps them solve an arson case.

Investigators ruled that the fire was intentionally set just before 10 p.m. Thursday, March 16, on Parkwood near Winifred, in a residential neighborhood between Venoy and Merriman.

The fire burned a small greenhouse and caused some damage to an adjacent, detached garage, said Assistant Chief/Fire Marshal Chris Szpara.

"It's definitely an arson," he said. The fire didn't spread to a house, and no one was injured. Szpara and Fire Chief Michael Reddy this week sent

letters to neighborhood residents informing them that the blaze was set by arsonists and asking for their help.

"Further investigation revealed that young teens had been seen recently at the location where the fire occurred," Szpara and Reddy wrote in their letter.

The Westland Fire Department and the Michigan Arson Prevention Committee have jointly announced a reward of up to \$5,000 for information leading to the arrest and/or conviction of those involved in the fire.

Fire officials pledged that all information will be kept confidential. Anyone who can help with the investigation is urged to call the fire department at (734) 467-3201 or (800) 44-ARSON.

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Volume 41
Number 88



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INDEX

| | |
|------------------|-----|
| APARTMENTS | F8 |
| BELIEFS & VALUES | C10 |
| AUTOMOTIVE | G7 |
| CROSSWORD | F7 |
| JOB | G2 |
| MOVIES | D14 |
| OBITUARIES | C10 |
| REAL ESTATE | F1 |
| SERVICE GUIDE | G2 |
| SPORTS | C1 |
| TASTE | B5 |

Coming Sunday on the PINK page

Alligators & Old Mink
Vintage comes to the Community House



Carmen Yaconis: His second career benefited families

BY SUE MASON
STAFF WRITER

Carmen Yaconis was a man who said what he meant and meant what he said. At first blush, he came across as a tough, macho person, but was just the opposite, a very caring human being. That's what Joyce Shaine discovered during the 9 1/2 years she worked with the Westland resident at the Wayne County Family Center. "He was just a people person, he was adored by all of the donors," said Shaine. "He had an easy way with people, he could make you feel comfortable. He was loved by everyone ... He was a very dear friend to me."

Those were the sentiments Shaine shared with friends and family members who gathered recently to remember Mr. Yaconis who passed away Dec. 10, 2005, at the age of 72. The service of respect and celebration was held at Grace Moravian Church in Westland with the Rev. Sherwin Alleyne officiating.

According to Family Center Director Carroll Eddy, Mr. Yaconis was retired from one career when he began a new one at the center in 1991.

He started out as a maintenance employee and worked his way up to building manager. Along the way, he worked

with donors, collecting clothing and appliances, "anything you could think of," and storing the stuff upstairs for use by residents while at the shelter and after they left, she said.

"It was a second career for him and he came to understand that he liked helping people," Eddy said. "He was the kind of guy who would give you the shirt off his back, if you need it."

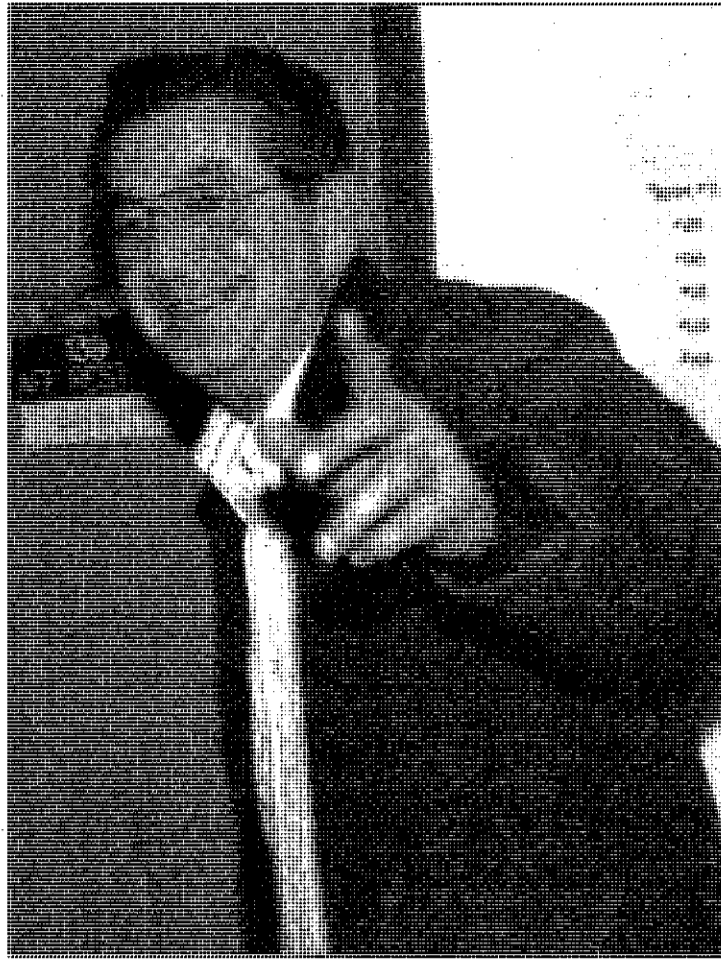
Mr. Yaconis, who is survived by his wife Florence and several children, also had a way of getting people to donate to the center whatever was needed. According to Eddy, he helped get Michigan Dairy to provide juice and milk for the center, freeing up money for other things.

"We have a great community here and Carmen definitely cultivated the people who regularly sought to donate to the center," she said.

"Our donors were always generous and never turned down a request from Carmen," added Shaine.

According to James Gilbert, director of Westland's Housing and Community Development, Mr. Yaconis started many programs at the center, mentored families and children and supported and trained many of the center's employees and directors.

"Carmen was the building superintendent, however, he



Carmen Yaconis was a fixture at the Wayne County Family Center in Westland.

was such an outgoing figure and has such a strong personality that many people thought he was the director," Gilbert said.

It was the children at the center, however, who were most important to him, according to Shaine. He made sure their experience there would be a happy one.

"He would take them on field trips, make sure they had a very magical Christmas and most of all, give them the attention they so desperately needed," Shaine said. "He understood how important childhood memories were, so that as children grew older they could look back on their time with us with the fondest

of memories." Shaine described Mr. Yaconis as "the driving force and mainstay" of the center. He also was the "one person you could depend on if you had a problem or need," she said.

"His coworkers and I will miss him deeply, there can never be another Carmen," she said. "He had that very special rapport with anyone he came in contact with. He was a person you could not easily forget."

Eddy agrees. "We definitely miss him around here," she said. "He had a large effect on this community."

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Routine traffic stop leads to arrest of robbery suspect

BY DARRELL CLEM
STAFF WRITER

A suspect accused of robbing a Westland pharmacy is awaiting extradition from Tennessee after being arrested there for a minor traffic offense, police said Tuesday.

Denis Michael Goldring, 49, is charged with armed robbery and being a fourth-degree habitual offender in a warrant approved Friday by Westland 18th District Magistrate Donald Vandersloot.

A lone bandit is accused of going into the CVS pharmacy at Newburgh and Cherry Hill about 7:35 p.m. Tuesday, March 14, and demanding prescription drugs such as Vicodin.

"He had a note that said he had a gun, and he implied that he had a gun in his pocket," police Sgt. David Heater said. "The pharmacist gave him some generic Vicodin, and he fled with that."

Police obtained a video from the store's surveillance camera that showed the incident. Police then circulated a still photo of the suspect, who was identified by Officer Jeff Jedrusik based on an earlier encounter. Goldring has a criminal history for mostly drug-related offenses.

"I thought it was a fantastic accomplishment that Officer Jedrusik was able to search his memory based on the hundreds of people he has come into con-

tact with and to isolate the memory of Mr. Goldring from his days as a (former) narcotics officer," Pfannes said. "This led to the identification of Mr. Goldring."

Meanwhile, Heater found a prior mug shot of Goldring, who was identified by the CVS pharmacist during a photo lineup. Police learned that Goldring had a Westland address on his driver's license but that he also was known to stay in Wayne and Canton, Heater said.

Police got another break after information about Goldring was put into a national computer network that identified him as having been arrested on March 22 in Columbia, Tenn. His arrest there came after he was caught driving with a suspended license during a routine traffic stop, Heater said.

Goldring, who had been released by Tennessee police, was arrested there again on Friday after they were notified by Westland authorities that he was wanted for the CVS robbery, Heater said.

Goldring is being held in jail in Tennessee as local authorities move to extradite him to face charges here.

He will face a preliminary hearing that will determine whether he should stand trial. If convicted, he could face penalties ranging up to life in prison.

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Benefit concert features show tunes, movie music

Fans of *The Music Man* and *The Incredibles* will want to be at O'Leary Auditorium in Garden City tomorrow, when the Novi Concert Band, under the baton of director Scott Cramer, band director at John Glenn High School in Westland, will present a benefit concert.

Sponsored by the Garden City Foundation for Educational Excellence, the concert will be 7:30-9 p.m. March 31 and feature music from *The Music Man*, *The Incredibles* and *Pirates of the Caribbean*.

Assisting Cramer will be Diran Kochyan, band director

for the Garden City Public Schools. He also will perform a clarinet solo, *Stranger on the Shore*, by Kochyan.

Refreshments will be available, and all students will receive a free book from First Books. There also will be a 50/50 raffle. Tickets cost \$5 for adults and \$3 for students and are available at the door. O'Leary Auditorium is at Garden City High School, 6500 Middlebelt north of Ford.

Proceeds will benefit the foundation which provides mini-grants to help with programs in Garden City schools and also sponsors cultural events in the community.

WESTLAND Observer

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Curtain call

Live music will highlight Wayne High's 'Annie Get Your Gun'

BY SUE MASON
STAFF WRITER

The love story of Annie Oakley and Frank Butler will come to life on the stage of Stockmeyer Auditorium this weekend when Wayne Memorial High School Drama Club presents *Annie Get Your Gun*.

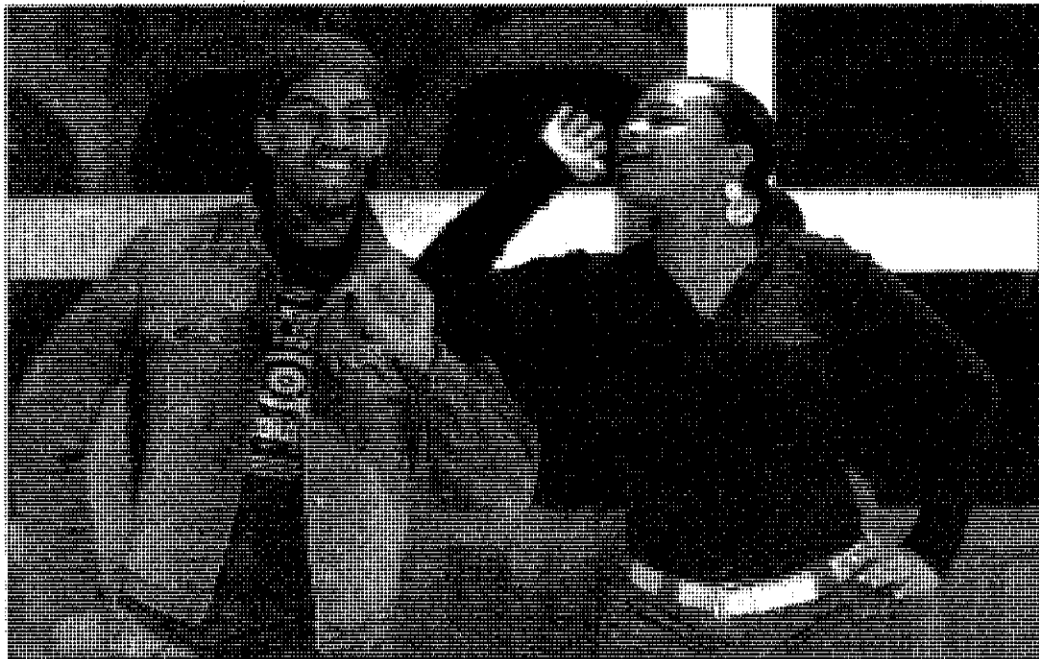
Kristina Monty will appear as Annie with Gideon Ault as Frank in the high school production which, for the first time in 10 years, will feature live music.

"Our last show - The Music Man - we used CD accompaniment, but I wanted to stray from that for *Annie Get Your Gun*," said director and drama teacher Katie Sullivan. "It's one of my favorite shows, and I knew to put on that show, we need live music."

Sullivan decided that the students and audience would benefit from having the three-piece combo made up of University of Michigan music students seated in the orchestra pit rather than backstage, so the stage pit has been uncovered and readied for the performances at 7 p.m. this evening through Saturday, April 1.

"This is my second year at Wayne Memorial and the students have been asking me from day one if we can have live music," said Sullivan. "This has been an eye-opener for them. It's a lot different than working with CD accompaniment."

The live accompaniment will mean music during scene changes and that the lead actors will have microphones turned on only when they sing. The rest of the time, they will have to project their voices, Sullivan said.



Michael Springer as Tommy Keeler and Sharita Hudson as Winnie Tate rehearse a dance scene of "Annie Get Your Gun" which opens at 7 p.m. tonight at Wayne Memorial High School's Stockmeyer Auditorium.

A classic musical, *Annie Get Your Gun* was updated due to some of its content, and performed on Broadway in 1999. While it is Annie and Frank's love story, it also is a story about Dolly Tate (Allison Areeda), who dislikes Indians, and her sister, Winnie (Sharita Hudson), who is in love and wants to marry Tommy Keeler (Michael Springer), an Indian.

"Dolly has a lot of tribulations, but in the end comes to like Indians," said Sullivan. Also appearing in the production are Evan Williams as Buffalo Bill Cody, Andy Rodriguez as Charlie Davenport, Matt Lancaster as Foster Wilson and Pawnee Bill, Mike McBee as Mac the prop man, Running Deer and the messenger and Tim Rundell as Chief Sitting Bull.

Also in the cast are Katy Seguin as Jessie Oakley, Meagan Ferguson as Nellie Oakley, Andrew Roberts as Little Jake, Sammy Banks as Eagle Feather, Briana Dewyer as the dining car waitress and sleeping car porter, Alyssa Lucas as Mrs. Sylvia Potter-Porter and Cara Ball as Mrs. Schuyler Adams. Banks, Dewyer, Lucas, McBee and Ball also will appear in the ensemble along with Cameo Bond, Kimberly Chau, Serrina O'Brien, Scott Sieczkowski and Jon Wasinski. Rodriguez and Williams are serving as assistant directors, and fellow cast member Ault is in charge of publicity design. Majorie Wright and Nicole Vasloff are the choreographers. Vasloff also is serving as the costume manager. Brian Buckner is the music director and pit orchestra conductor.

"He has worked wonderfully with the kids vocally," Sullivan said of Buckner. "He's energetic and caring and has done wonderful things with the students."

The crew also includes Tori Bradley, production assistant, Justin Monit and Andy Rowland, technical directors, Bill Mayfield and Mark Wright, publicity publishers, Tim Sullivan, publicity, Ashley Sullivan and Melissa Wincher, costumes and makeup, and the production crew of Samantha Burleson, Fawna Cicotte, Heather Greenshields, Lindsay Groh, David Kiracofe, Jacque Matheson, Adrienne Meagher, Ashley Robinson and Bobbi Turner.

Tickets for the production are \$7 for students and \$10 adults and are available at the door.

Business owners get tips on how to prevent crime

BY JULIE BROWN
STAFF WRITER

Lt. James Ridener has some common sense advice for those opening a business each day.

"Try not to open or close your business by yourself," said Ridener, of the Westland Police Department. "There's safety in numbers."

If you arrive at work and see something suspicious, such as an open window or door, call the police, Ridener said during a recent Westland Rotary lunch at the Sgt. S. Romanowski VFW Post 6896 in Westland.

If you are attacked, try to provide police with an accurate description. "What was the guy wearing," a vehicle description is helpful, too, he said, adding that owners should be careful about people loitering around their businesses with no good reason. "Stay alert, know your surroundings," Ridener added.

Ridener also urged business owners to:

- Mark areas off-limits to the public where employees can leave their possessions. Purses should be locked up or at least out of sight.

- Alarms and cameras can be worthwhile investments. Some cameras are aimed so they take pictures of the tops of people's heads, he said, which means they can't be identified.

- If you have the tapes, change them regularly," Ridener said. "That was a huge benefit to the police."

- A case in point, the murders and shootings at Neil's Party Store were easier to investigate and prosecute because tape was available.

- Get rid of large bills, which can be put in a safe.

body for a smaller bill," Ridener said, adding that that can help guard against counterfeiting.

- Vary bank times and routes. "If you have the ability to do it, take somebody with you," especially for night deposits, he said.

- Clear up clutter and trim bushes and trees.

"We've had numerous rooftop break-ins," he said. "Lighting's super important, not only inside your business, but outside your business. Crooks don't like bright lights and loud noises."

Ridener recommends against displaying business windows with displays or ads. Height markers by doors can help employees with descriptions, if a business is held up.

"Make shoplifters feel watched," he said. "They don't like attention."

You can post signs saying you'll prosecute, require receipts for cash returns, and keep clothing racks away from doors, he added. He also recommends business owners "watch for people with loose baggy clothing," especially out of season.

In some cases, shoplifters working together may have one create a disturbance while the accomplice steals.

"Check your inventory often." For expensive items like jewelry, it's good to ask for ID before showing merchandise, he said.

"If the customer's legitimate, they're not going to mind," he added.

Thumbprints are a good idea if you take checks. "ID can be faked. A thumbprint can't be faked."

The Web site, michigan.gov, has access to ICHAT, the Internet Criminal History Access Tool. It's free to nonprofits and government agencies, and a small fee for businesses.

JUDGE

FROM PAGE A1

If elected as judge, Cicirelli's annual salary would increase by \$42,298. She is paid \$95,974 as mayor, compared to a district judge's salary of \$138,272.

Judicial candidates face a May 2 deadline for entering the district court race. They have to be a registered voter of the city, a member of the Michigan Bar Association for at least five years and be less than 70 years old. They also have to circulate petitions and collect at least 400 valid signa-

tures of Westland voters. Cicirelli has been an attorney for 21 years, working many years in a family practice before she became mayor. McConnell has worked for the city attorney's office for 11½ years. Before that, he was a research attorney for the Michigan Court of Appeals.

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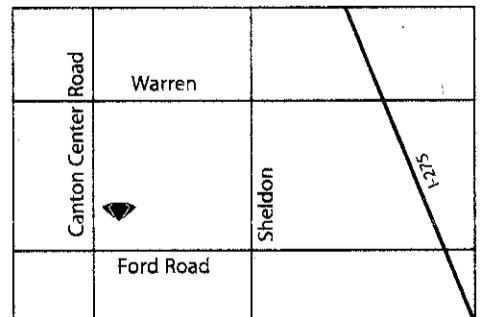
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2 school candidates share views

BY STEPHANIE ANGELYN CASOLA
STAFF WRITER

Livonia Public Schools trustee candidates Joanne Morgan and Steve King squared off in their first public forum last week, taking on issues like the budget, the Legacy Initiative, and schools of choice.

Incumbent candidate Morgan, 50, is a 10-year veteran of the board who named student achievement as her top priority. She is a former teacher, a PTA member, and director of children's ministries at her church.

King, 51, has been a candidate for school board for the past three years. He said he hopes to be a new voice for the district's citizens. He is a father of four, a teacher, coach and leader of the band Steve King and the Dittilies.

Both participated in the Livonia PTA Council's Candidate's Forum last week.

If elected, King said his top priorities would include making the board and district more accountable and responsive. He also noted the importance of handling the district's budget.

For Morgan, all priorities come second to student achievement. She said the district needs to work with legislators to seek adequate levels of funding for public schools.

ROLE OF TRUSTEE

When asked about what role a trustee should play in the district, King said he would be a "conduit for all Livonia citizens" and plans to "bring the public back into public education." King said he would stay informed of legislation impacting schools.

Morgan said a trustee is responsible for policy governance, hiring the best superintendent possible, communicating with people and working with members of the board.

THE LEGACY DEBATE

Both candidates addressed the impact the Legacy Initiative has had on the community. The Legacy plan aims to close buildings and reconfigure grades throughout the district, as well as save \$1.5 to \$2 million per year, beginning next fall.

King said the plan was "ill-conceived" and is "tearing this district apart." He noted that neighboring Redford Union Schools offered 13 plans to close one school while LPS offered one option and intends to close seven schools. King said he doesn't support school closings.

Morgan said the plan came about when the district realized it "no longer supports the schools we have." She said the plan will keep class sizes low, reduce the occurrence of split classes and kindergarten overflow, and increase specials classes for grades five and six.

"We heard what's important to the entire community," Morgan said.

IMPACT OF A RECALL

When asked whether a possible recall of five board trustees would help or hurt the district, the candidates expressed opposing views. Should the Citizens for Livonia's Future succeed in recalling those trustees, Wayne County RESA would appoint people to fill those seats until an election was held, potentially next November.

"I can't see any good coming out of the recall of five board members," said Morgan, "particularly five as experienced as my peers." She noted that the board has cut \$19 million from its budget over the past five years "and no one seemed to notice."

Morgan said a recall would bring about "multiple changes of leadership - at a time of change."

But King said: "I think it's time for change in this district - serious, deep change."

He said those working on the recall effort are "knowledgeable, dedicated and passionate," and feel like "it's their only recourse."

"This city has turned into a blue and a red city," said King, referring to the color of lawn signs that support the district or support a recall. "That to me shows a definite lack in leadership. Good leadership brings people together."

OUTSOURCING

When asked about outsourcing in LPS, the candidates both agreed it is something to consider.

Morgan said she would consider outsourcing for some resources. It's something she can "tolerate" to cut costs, except when it comes to staff. She is opposed to outsourcing jobs like custodians and secretaries - who go "way beyond" their duties.

King said while "it's a thorny issue" he would not hesitate to discuss the possibility with employees like custodians and food service workers. "The money has to be spent in the classroom," he said. "You have to look at any way you can to save money."

SCHOOLS OF CHOICE

When asked about the possibility of open enrollment for the future of Livonia Public Schools, both Morgan and King stood against the idea.

Morgan said "this board steadfastly said that schools of choice is not the answer." She supports that opinion and considers schools of choice to be of short-term benefit to districts. While it can boost enrollment, she said, it can also make it difficult for a district to pass a millage or bond in the community when students are coming in from other areas.

King said while he's a staunch supporter of neighborhood schools, open enrollment may be "where we're headed." He noted concerns that face the neighboring Clarenceville school district, where King said students are "not afforded the same opportunities" they were prior to schools of choice. "I'd like to keep Livonia kids in Livonia schools."

WORKING TOGETHER

Both candidates said they would work with fellow trustees if elected to the board.

King said he would speak his mind and research the issues, remaining passionate about education. Morgan noted she is among a board of seven very different people and manages to build relationships and serve as a mentor.

The single four-year term that King and Morgan are vying for on the Livonia Public Schools Board of Education will be up for a vote on Tuesday, May 2.

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Hello Dolly takes stage

Churchill High School's all-school musical, *Hello Dolly*, will be staged April 6-8. Shown at a dress rehearsal are student actors (standing, from left) Rachel Lambert, Vincent Roberts, Matthew Hawthorne and Kayla Adams; and (front, from left) Robert Lott, Sarah Walls, Eden Malyn and Ethan Hedeem. Shows are at 7:30 p.m. Tickets are \$10 for adults, \$9 for senior citizens and \$8 for students, and may be purchased at the door. For more information, call (734) 744-2650, ext. 70177.

Parents and pupils can check grades online

BY DAVE VARGA
STAFF WRITER

Parents of students at Churchill High School no longer need to wait for progress reports or semester report cards to check on their child's progress.

Churchill is piloting the Pinnacle Internet Grade Viewer system, which enables parents and students to check out grades - plus attendance, missing assignments, discipline reports and more - by going online.

The program costs \$995 per school, plus \$400 to install, according to Jim Fraser, supervisor of the information technology department, who added that it was paid from the district's left-over technology funds. An extra add-on program allows school staff to send e-mails that can be generated automatically and sent directly to parents.

"The goal is to eliminate, I wish I had known... from a parent's vocabulary," explained

Churchill is piloting the Pinnacle Internet Grade Viewer system, which enables parents and students to check out grades by going online.

James Gibbons, Churchill counselor, during the Livonia school board meeting Monday. Gibbons detailed how parents and students each get unique ID numbers to check information online.

With the add-on e-mail program, which cost the school \$1,695, e-mail notices can be sent daily, weekly or monthly, for example, whenever a student gets a grade below 70 percent with a warning - or even grades above 90 percent, for positive reinforcement.

The system can also be set up to send notices of absences or when assignments are late or missing. E-mails can also be generated to groups of stu-

dents, such as CAPA or student athletes. "It can be customized to just about any need a teacher or parent wants," Gibbons said.

During the pilot program, parents and teachers are offering suggestions. One is that teachers could have remote computer access; another is that teachers would have a flag to know when parents read the e-mails.

Plans are to export the Internet viewing program next year to the district's other secondary school buildings, which all use the Pinnacle Grade Book system. Elementary buildings do not use the software.

Trustee Rob Freeman asked about money saved. "If we can be paperless, it probably would save the district plenty of money" in mailing costs, Gibbons said. In addition, the program can identify parents who don't have e-mail to send them progress reports or other notices via mail.

dvarga@hometownlife.com | (734) 953-2119

Renovation costs \$555,000 at Cooper

Five classrooms at Cooper Elementary School will be renovated at a cost of \$555,000, under a proposal expected to be approved by the Livonia Board of Education next week. The project would be paid for through the district's sinking fund, which can only pay for capital projects.

Rod Hosman, director of administrative services, told the school board that work would be done on the five former industrial arts rooms (metal and wood shop from when the building was Whittier Junior High) would have been needed eventually even without the Legacy Initiative, which will put 900 students in grades 5-6 into Cooper this fall. "It was on a long-term list of things we want to get to," Hosman said

later. Bringing the rooms up to code for student uses had been estimated to cost \$600,000, Hosman said, noting the bidders being awarded the contracts will actually bring in the work for under that price. The bids spanned 18 different projects, ranging from steel and

masonry to windows and mechanical work. The rooms, described as "deteriorated," are currently used for storage. That means the work can begin once the stored items are removed and before the end of the school year, Hosman said.

by Dave Varga

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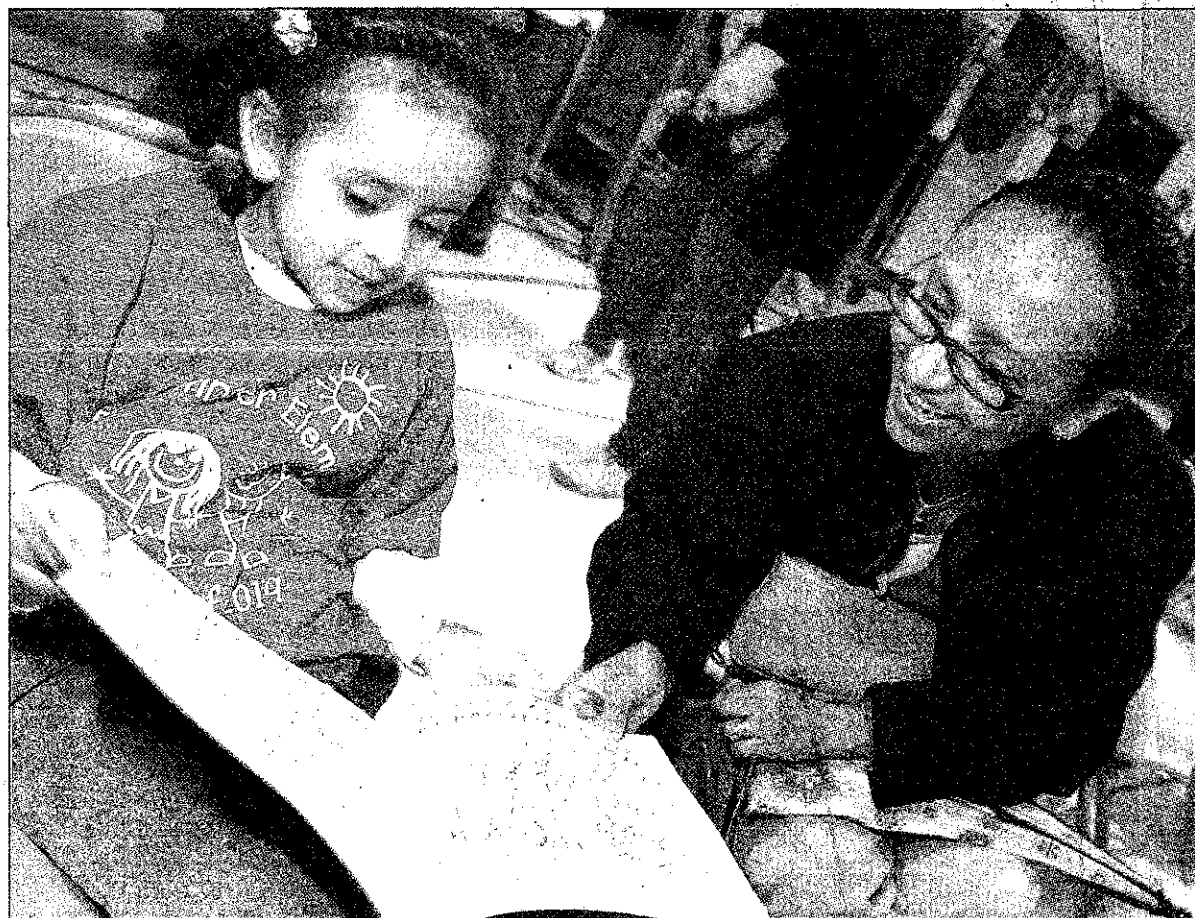
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PHOTOS BY TOM HAWLEY | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Welcome to school

Kindergarten teacher Jennifer Williams holds the hand of Emma Daniels as she leads a group of future students through Walker-Winter Elementary School in Canton. The youngsters, are wearing the T-shirts and backpacks they received as part of the Wayne-Westland school district's annual Kindergarten Roundup, held Tuesday in its 17 elementary schools.



Helina Wondwossen shows her mother Aida Endrias what was in the backpack she received during the roundup.

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INFORMATION CENTRAL

It may not be a news flash, but the NCHS reports that approximately one in five persons age 70 or older report some level of visual impairment, and that "nearly 37 percent of all visits to physicians' offices for eye care are made by persons 65 years of age or older" (Trends in Hearing and Vision Among Older Americans, 3/2001, <http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/ahcd/agingtrends/02vision.pdf>).

Because the library considers visually impaired patrons important, we offer a large print collection along with assistive technology devices like the Optilec magnifier and Kurzweil Reader. Large print titles are just like regular print titles, except that the text is larger. By using slightly thinner paper and manipulating the page margins, publishers manage to enlarge the print size without greatly affecting the physical size of the book. This format helps keep readers active even as their eyesight declines and is extremely popular even with less visually impaired patrons - it's just easier on the eyes!

The titles in our large print collection mirror those in our regular print

collection. New titles by popular authors like James Patterson, Danielle Steel, Nora Roberts, Clive Cussler and the like all turn up in large print. In fact, a little secret of the public library is that popular titles will often remain checked in on the large print shelves even when they're checked out everywhere else in the library, simply because they escape most patrons' detection.

We select genre titles in mystery, romance, western fiction, science fiction and horror. But we don't patronize our patrons, either you'll find new literary titles by E. L. Doctorow, Geraldine Brooks, Marilynne Robinson, Michael Cunningham, Alice Walker, and Tom Wolfe, as well as authors like Jennifer Weiner, and Terry McMillan.

Classics are available - Jane Austen, Ernest Hemingway, H. G. Wells, Pearl Buck - and a full range of non-fiction titles and biographies, too.

Please don't let vision loss keep you from the library. Call (734) 326-6123 or stop by the Reference Desk. We'll get you to the large print titles and you can continue to read to your heart's content.

Habitat for Humanity: 7 p.m. April 4.

Habitat for Humanity is a non-profit organization that seeks to provide affordable quality housing to people worldwide. Join us at the library as Marshal Wied of Habitat for Humanity explains the ins and outs of the organization and tells you how you can get involved.

Change your World ... One room at a Time: 2 p.m. April 8.

Join us for a free program on interior design with Interior Designer Amanda Stodart of Interior Answers, and learn ways to freshen up the look of your home.

The library also is looking for volunteers to deliver books to our Homebound patrons. Contact our homebound coordinator at (734) 326-6123 if you're interested.

Information Central is compiled by Bridget Sturdy, reference librarian, at the William P. Faust Public Library, 6123 Central City Parkway, Westland. For more information, call (734) 326-6123.

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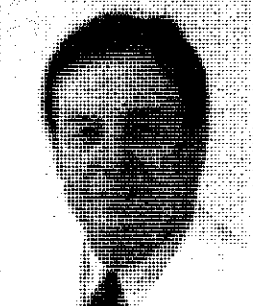
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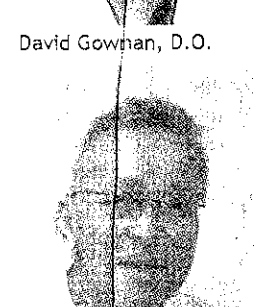
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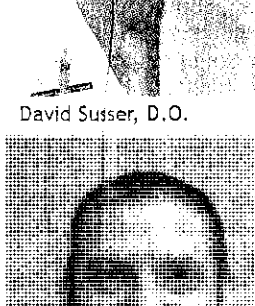
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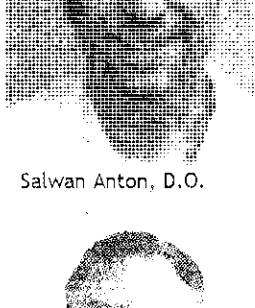
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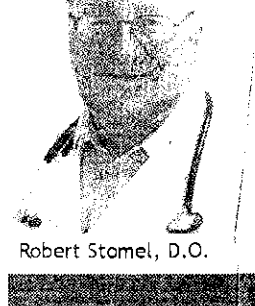
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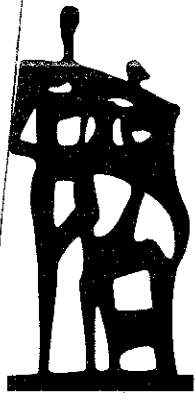


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Why should you choose Botsford?

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- The first Observational Heart Failure Program in Michigan
- An accredited angioplasty program with many of the most experienced cardiologists performing angioplasty in Michigan
- A national consumer guide ranks Botsford General Hospital as outstanding in cardiac care, including heart attack and heart failure

The Difference is being prepared; regular checkups and healthy heart awareness.

Symptoms of a heart attack in men

- The most common symptom of a heart attack is not chest pain, but is really chest pressure. The uncomfortable pressure increases with activity, like shoveling snow, and decreases with resting.
- Discomfort in other areas of the upper body including one or both arms, back or stomach
- Shortness of breath, with or without chest pain
- Other signs include cold sweat, nausea or lightheadedness

Symptoms of a heart attack in women

- Shortness of breath or fatigue which may be combined with chest pressure.
- Nausea or vomiting.
- Back, neck, shoulder, abdominal or jaw pain.

If I have chest pain or pressure, should I go to the hospital?
Absolutely. Go to a hospital, like Botsford General Hospital, with an accredited Chest Pain Center.

What is a Chest Pain Center?

While a large percentage of hospitals maintain chest pain units, the definition of these centers varies by institution. If you choose to go to a hospital with an accredited chest pain center, you are partnering with physicians and nurses who have initiated care processes, which will give you the best possible medical outcome.

If I am having a heart attack, can Botsford treat me?

Yes. Botsford is one of the few community hospitals in Michigan where you can receive primary angioplasty treatment for a heart attack. If you have low-risk chest pain, our board-certified cardiologists will place you in the Chest Pain Center program where stress testing is available seven days a week.

What is a cardiac catheterization?

A cardiac cath, or angiogram, is a procedure used to take x-rays of the heart muscle and valves. It shows how well these are working, the extent of the damage after a heart attack, which coronary arteries are narrowed, and the degree of narrowing.

The procedure uses a catheter (a long, thin, flexible tube) inserted through an artery (blood vessel) usually in the thigh up to the heart. A colorless dye is injected in the catheter and x-ray pictures are taken of the heart and coronary arteries. This is a nonsurgical procedure and a patient receives a mild sedative but remains awake during the procedure.

What is the difference between cardiac cath and angioplasty?

A cardiac cath is used to take x-rays or pictures of the heart. Once done, an angioplasty, or balloon angioplasty, may be immediately performed.

The angioplasty procedure uses a catheter, like the cardiac cath, with a deflated balloon on the tip and is inserted through an artery to the heart. When the catheter reaches the narrowed artery in the heart, the balloon is then inflated and deflated several times to open up the artery.

What do stress tests show?

These tests show heart functions and malfunctions - at rest and while under stress through exercise or IV medications to simulate exercise. There are four types of medical tests - two using echocardiography and two using nuclear imaging. Botsford General Hospital was instrumental in pioneering ultrasound procedures. Testing is available seven days a week at our Chest Pain Center.

An electrocardiogram is a test used to record the electrical activity of the heart through electrodes placed on the chest, arms, and legs. It helps tell if there is a decreased supply of blood and oxygen to the heart, if there are any irregular heartbeats or rhythm and if a heart attack has occurred. It also tells what part of the heart was damaged.

A stress echocardiogram produces images of the beating heart made by bouncing high-frequency (ultrasound) waves off the heart. This is generally more accurate to diagnose blockage in arteries than an electrocardiogram. It also helps determine if more cardiac tests and treatment are needed.

A nuclear medicine exercise treadmill stress test evaluates coronary blood flow to determine which areas of the heart are not getting enough blood and oxygen, how quickly the heart recovers after exercise, any irregular heart rhythms and if a heart attack has occurred in the past. During this test, electrodes are placed on the chest and an intravenous line allows the medicine to flow in the heart. A special camera to record blood flow photographs the medicine.

My relative has congestive heart failure and, when admitted to a hospital, stays seven or more days. I heard Botsford has a program to reduce this stay.
Yes, some patients may be treated and leave within 24 hours with excellent results in our Observational Heart Failure Program. Botsford developed this specialized program in partnership with physicians at the Cleveland Clinic. It is one of the first of its kind in Michigan.

A lot of hospitals seem to be advertising that they give excellent heart care. How can I compare area hospitals and treatments?

The federal government has already done this for you. You can go to www.hospitalscompare.hhs.gov to compare hospitals in Michigan and review their compliance in treating heart failure and heart attacks. If you experience a heart problem, Botsford's board-certified physicians are ready to provide the treatment and care you will need.

The Botsford Health Care Continuum is an integrated system of care which includes Botsford General Hospital, the Botsford Physician Network, Community Emergency Medical Service, the Botsford Continuing Care Corporation and the Botsford Center for Health Improvement.

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CHURCH

FROM PAGE A1

Briffa said the parishioners have been preparing themselves for a possible closing. The delay in closing the church will allow parishioners to celebrate its 50th anniversary next year.

Four other Westland churches will cluster as part of the plan. Cluster means that two or more parishes will share a priest and no churches will close. Divine Savior will be paired with St. Theodore in the north end of the city, while St. Richard and Ss. Simon and Jude will cluster in the south end.

The plan also recommends that St. Damian cluster although a partner church won't be announced until April 1. It also recommends that St. Damian School be kept open "in light of the forthcoming public school closings in Livonia" and that it work together with St. Michael School in Livonia since both schools are in such close proximity.

"I've made hundreds of pastoral visits in the past 16 years and I appreciate the pride people have in their parishes,"

Maida said in making the announcement. "There's no denying the pain and sense of loss for the parishes and schools."

Under the plan, 52 parishes in the archdiocese will cluster by December of 2006. The written plans extend through 2007 and beyond, reducing the grand total of Detroit area parishes from 306 to 290 by 2008.

Archdiocese Director of Communications Ned McGrath said it's not a question of whose church or school will be affected and whose will stay as it is.

"In short, all (schools and parishes) participated in the process and will be impacted," he said.

The cause for the reductions have a lot to do with declining population in the City of Detroit and changes in ethnic and racial demographics across the archdiocese. The changes also are rooted in the low number of priests expected to be ordained and the high number of them who are serving well beyond traditional retirement age.

Staff writers Alex Lundberg and Darrell Ciem contributed to this story.

smason@hometownlife.com | (734) 953-2112

Senior Dinner Dances

The Wayne Ford Civic League is hosting a Senior Dinner and Dance Sunday, April 2 and April 23, at the hall, 1645 N. Wayne Road in Westland. The dinners and dances start at noon and feature a full buffet dinner, beer, wine, coffee and pop with dancing to the live entertainers. Tickets are \$8 for members and \$10 for non-members of the league. Memberships are on sale year round and are only \$5 for seniors. Tickets are available at the door. Call (734) 728-5010 for more information. Participants must be 60 years of age and older to attend.

Healthy Living

Oakwood Annapolis Hospital in Wayne is in line to host an Oakwood Healthcare System Project Healthy Living next month.

Project Healthy Living offers a wide array of helpful and practical health-related activities and provides a variety of screenings to adults 18 years and older.

Oakwood Annapolis Hospital event will be 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Wednesday-Friday, April 26-28, at Westland Shopping Center, 35000 W. Warren at Wayne Road.

Many of the health screening tests and services are offered free of charge. There is a nominal cost for some screenings and all tests are administered by healthcare professionals.

For more information, call (800) 543-WELL.

Ecological Gardening

Are you interested in learning how to create beautiful gardens that also have an ecological function, such as rain gardens, habitat and riparian buffers?

The consider the Ecological Gardening course with an extra component offered to those who want to become Master Composters. The series includes lectures by professionals in the field, hands-on activities, field trips and a design project.

AROUND WESTLAND

Participants will also have the opportunity to apply the concepts learned in this class to Wayne County Department of Environment Grow Zone installation projects in Hines Drive Park.

This course will be held 6-8 p.m. Wednesday, April 12-May 31, at Wayne County Department of Environment, 3600 Commerce Court, Wayne. Registration fee of \$120 includes book and all class materials. For more information, call Mary Vangieson at (734) 326-3936.

Fish fry

The Men's Fellowship Group of the Salvation Army's Wayne-Westland Corps will host a fish fry and bake sale 5-8 p.m. Saturday, March 31 and April 7, at the corps' Community Center, 2300 Venoy Road, Westland.

The cost is a minimum donation of \$6 and the proceeds will go to buy new kitchen equipment for the center's feeding program.

Band booster benefit

The Franklin Band Boosters will host a fund-raiser at Archie's Family Restaurant, at 30471 Plymouth Road, from 4-10 p.m. Monday, April 3.

Archie's will donate 25 percent of all checks with the words "Franklin Band" written on them during that time. For more information, call (734) 422-0815.

Open House

St. Damian Catholic School will be having a preschool and kindergarten open house 6:30-8 p.m. Tuesday, April 25. The school has preschool programs for three-four-year-olds and full-day kindergarten, both with three- and five-day options. Registration will be accepted at the open house. St. Damian is at 29891 Joy, Westland. Call (734) 427-1680.

Garage sale time

Hayes Elementary fourth-graders are working to raise money to pay for a trip to Lansing. To do so, the students are hosting a garage sale from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. Saturday, April 8, at the school, 30600 Louise, in Westland. All are welcome.

Texas Hold 'Em

St. Theodore Mens Club is sponsoring a Texas Hold 'Em Tournament 7-11:30 p.m. Friday, April 21, in the Social Hall, 8200 N. Wayne Road, Westland.

The cost is \$40 to buy in and only 110 advance tickets will be sold. No tickets will be sold at the door which opens at 6 p.m. Top prize will be \$500. Players must be at least age 18 and age 21 to drink.

For tickets, contact Mary at the parish office at (734) 425-4421. For more information, call Ken at (734) 564-4475

■ The Westland Jayces will hold a Texas Hold 'Em Tournament and Vegas Night Saturday, April 22, at the Bailey Recreation Center, 36551 Ford Road.

The poker tournament will run 6 p.m. to midnight, and here will be no rebuy into the tournament. Pre-registration is \$40 before April 8 and \$50 at the door. Registration begins at 5 p.m. that evening.

The Vegas Night will be 7 p.m. to midnight. It will offer games of black jack, Hold 'Em, Let It Ride and seven-card poker. Food, pop and beer also will be available for purchase.

For more information, call (734) 226-6400 and leave a message.

Spring Bazaar

Edison Elementary is holding a Spring Bazaar and Art Show 6-9 p.m. Thursday, April 6. There will be 25 vendors, a bake sale with eating area, baby-sitting with crafts for the kids and an art show featuring students' artwork throughout the halls.

Membership month

If you're interested in community citizenship, the opportunity to serve, growth and development, cultural awareness and nice people, then the Wayne Rotary Club wants to hear from you.

The club is extending an invitation to people who live or work within the community to join the club as part of its Membership Month.

People interested in joining can call Art Quintal at (734) 722-8925.

Bunny bowl

Children will have a chance to bowl with the Easte Bunny 1-3 p.m. Saturday, April 1, at Town & Country Bowling Alley, at Wayne and Arondale.

Cost is \$7, and children must have adult supervision. The cost includes one game of bowling and shoes, one slice of pizza or one hot dog, and pop. Tickets may be purchased by calling (734) 722-6476.

The event is being sponsored by junior and youth members of Grange No. 389. Part of the proceeds will go to AAA Crisis Pregnancy Center.

Quilt Show

The Plymouth/Westland Grange 389 is holding its fourth annual spring quilt show, workshop and classes 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Saturday, April 22, at the senior Friendship Center, 1119 N. Newburgh, Westland.

There will be classes in hand appliqué (cost is \$25) and techniques for a peony and vine wall hanging (cost is \$55), as well as a special quilt project for children (cost is \$6). Pre-register by April 19.

There will be a demonstration of yarns and new products by Hancock Fabrics and a display of quilts. Velda Kirby of Make It Sew will speak at a quilt luncheon that costs \$10.

For \$1, people can enter quilts to be judged in such categories as antique, mixed technique, mixed medium, single technique, group quilting, quilted clothing, wall hanging and unfinished top.

Admission is \$1 in advance and \$2 at the door. For more information, call Sharon Strebbling at (734) 722-487 after 6 p.m.

Singers needed

If you like singing religious music? Kirk of Our Savior on Chery Hill west of Wayne Road, Westland, is looking for singers for its adult (ages 13 and up) traditional choir. All Christian faiths and all voice ranges are welcome. Rehearsals are at 7 p.m. Thursdays. For more information, call Tim at (734) 718-8733 or the church at (734) 728-D88.

DEATHS

B
Rachel Brandon
Brandon, 81, of Plymouth, died March 26.

C
William Jay "Bill" Corliss
Corliss, 49, formerly of Farmington, died March 25.

D
Ronald James Denton Sr.
Denton, 57, formerly of Westland, died March 27.

G
Ann C. Geis
Geis, 88, formerly of Rochester, died March 12.

Violet D. Gilligan
Gilligan, 93, of Rochester Hills, died March 21.

H
June L. Habermehl
Habermehl, 80, of Farmington, died March 24.

L
Rachel Rose Leo
Leo, 71, of Troy, died March 27.

M
Floyd Ray Miller
Miller, 78, died March 24.

S
Sam Shell
Shell, 90, formerly of Detroit, died March 13.

W
David J. Wagner
Wagner, 60, of Birmingham, died March 26.

Harry S. White
White, 82, formerly of Livonia, died March 23.

Sophie Witkowski (nee Gilwski)
Witkowski, 86, of Livonia, died March 25.

Complete paid obituaries can be found inside today's newspaper in Passages on page C10.

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OUR VIEWS

McKnight: good judge, citizen

Banners hanging on the flag stands behind the bench in Judge Gail McKnight's courtroom reflect her involvement in the legal profession. One is for the Suburban Bar Association and the other the Women's Lawyers Association.

Those two organizations are but the tip of the iceberg of McKnight's involvement in the legal profession and in the Westland community during the 38 years she has called this community home.

McKnight announced last week that she would not seek a fifth term as district court judge.

She has not been one to just sit and deliver justice. She has worked closely with fellow Judge C. Charles Bokos to find ways to help defendants not return in court, ranging from an intensive probation program to a court community garden, as well as taught classes for new inexperienced judges through the Michigan Judicial Institute.

However, we believe one of the best things she did was to move the court's annual Law Day program into the schools. Long before Judge Judy and reality TV, McKnight and Bokos were holding court in Wayne-Westland schools — no re-enactment, just real cases with real attorneys and real defendants.

The students who watch get an up-close and personal look at the judicial system and a reminder that there's a price to be paid for bad choices.

That said, we must also acknowledge what she did as citizen McKnight. Her contributions to the community started long before her swearing in as a judge in 1985.

She helped lay the groundwork for what is now the Westland Summer Festival; helped steer First Step, western Wayne County's domestic violence program, through its infancy; and was active in city government.

McKnight leaves large shoes to fill both as a judge and as a citizen of Westland. She has been good to this community and will be surely missed. We wish her well in her retirement and hope she will remain active in some way in the city she helped to shape.

Take seasonal cue for review of fire safety

Maybe it was an afghan they pulled off the sofa, or maybe it was a box they grabbed from the garage. Whatever they chose, it's likely kids will use it to make a pretend "tent" for the imaginary game of camping out.

Unfortunately, sometimes ordinary play time brings with it unwitting dangers. For instance, "Never put anything over a lamp, like clothes or a blanket, not even when playing," warns the Web site for the U.S. Fire Administration Kids (usfa.fema.gov/kids).

The Web site, and others found on an Internet search, are chock full of useful advice and games to teach children fire safety.

But it's this time of year — April 2 marks daylight-saving time — that parents need to take stock of simple safety precautions around their homes.

For starters, warn fire officials, make sure each house has at least one working smoke detector. Then twice a year — spring and fall are good reminders — change the batteries, whether they need it or not.

Fire safety isn't something to yawn over. Livonia, West Bloomfield, Garden City and Farmington all recorded at least one house fire in the first three months this year.

A woman and her two cats died March 4 in Farmington Hills, while a fire in Westland killed a 3-year-old child.

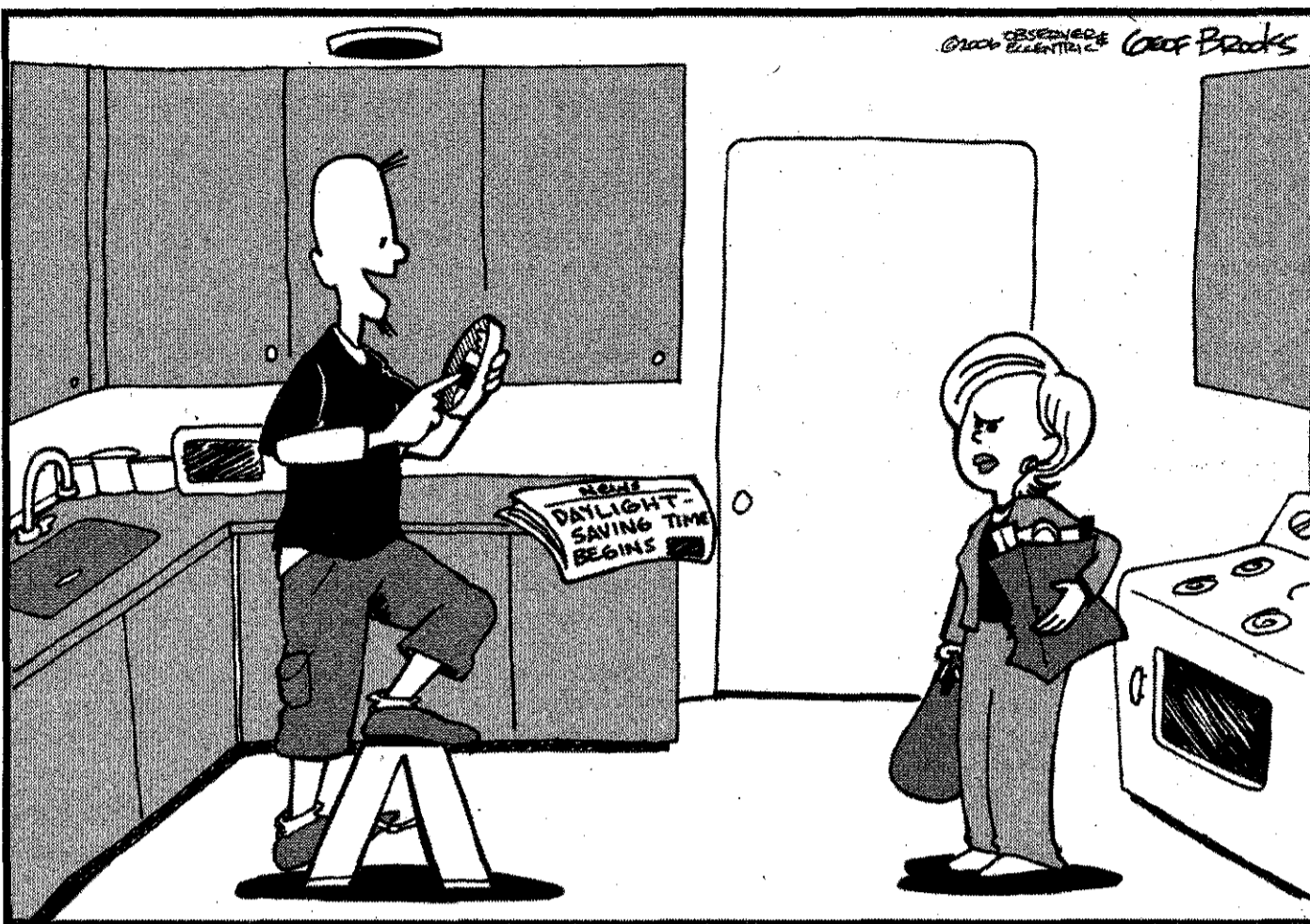
Other families were luckier. Smoke detectors on the second level of a West Bloomfield home in February alerted a family which escaped unharmed from a fire and, in another two-story house in Troy in December, a resident escaped unharmed after being alerted by smoke detectors.

These examples aren't a reason to panic, but to take precautions.

Besides checking smoke detectors, parents ought to take time for simple things like planning an escape route and making sure everyone knows where to meet outside.

But they also have a responsibility to teach their children about fire safety. It may be as simple as repeating the phrase: "stop, drop and roll." However, parents need to adapt their lessons according to their own living conditions.

Spring into action Sunday and make fire safety more than just child's play.



"Aren't you proud of me, hon? For once, I didn't need your cooking to remind me to change the smoke alarm batteries!"

Not tough on crime

The recent events in Washington as well as other Republican strongholds in the United States have the Republican Party members giving a wink and nod to the corruption and approving of criminal behavior.

Once a party slogan of being tough on crime, the Republican Party is folding like a deck of cards, unanimously, when faced with crime.

The current scandal involving Mr. Bush of illegal wiretaps of U.S. citizens within the U.S., shows Mr. Bush ignored the law prohibiting this. The improper behavior of Mr. Bush is the wiretaps were permitted by Congress as long as the petitions for wiretaps were presented before a "secret court" for approval.

There are two significant issues with this scandal and one resulting complication. Mr. Bush's actions of ignoring the law demonstrate clearly he believes he is above the law and can routinely subvert the checks and balances within government required for a functioning democracy.

The second issue is why he had bypassed a "secret court" to listen in on conversations of U.S. citizens. The only credible reason is he was listening to wiretaps that would not pass the muster of being terrorist wiretaps.

Maybe it is even a stretch, but not unlikely, the administration is wiretapping political foes. One thing we have learned with absolute certainty from Mr. Bush is when a scandal breaks within this administration, it is always worse than first reported.

The current representation within of the Republican Party is weak on crime. This is a fact.

Allan Biber
Westland

Then and now, fear not

I am an LPS graduate (Cleveland, Emerson and Franklin 1979) and have lived in Livonia most of my 44 years. When I grew up on Westfield Street in the '60s and '70s, there were about 75 children on our block alone. Today, in the Buchanan area where I now live, there are not 75 children in our entire neighborhood. We grew up and moved on. Our parents stayed.

Then, LPS had more than 50 schools and 38,000 students. Now, we will have less than half as many schools and less than half as many students also. Schools closed. Gone are Wilson, Jefferson and Rosedale Elementary. Gone are Bryant, Dickinson, Ford and Whitman Junior High ... and Bentley High School, too!

Does anyone really think that all the changes all of these school families had to go through were any easier than what we are now faced with? How about the sophomores and juniors that had to change high schools in 1985 when Bentley closed its doors forever? Not only were they forced to graduate from a different school than their older siblings, friends and teammates were split up between Churchill to the south and Stevenson to the north. Many people, including the mayor at the time, argued against the closing of Bentley. All of the same fears were shared then as now. Is LPS worse off for closing Bentley 20 years ago? Did it cause a "mass exodus"

LETTERS

of families from Livonia? Did it cause property values to decline? Fear not.

Approximately half of my high school classmates came from Westland. Joy Road was then and should still be an invisible boundary line. Many of my "old" classmates are now area homeowners, business owners, LPS parents, teachers, CFOs, C.P.A.s, PEs and M.B.A.s. Good families and good schools make good people ... not zip codes. Fear not.

Last, my child has ridden the bus two miles each way to Buchanan since kindergarten and is no worse off for it. The kids like to ride the bus. I feel better knowing that he gets on safely in front of my house, and gets dropped off safely at school.

Changes is constant. Those that embrace the changes and adapt will be the best for it.

Craig Jones
Livonia

Oz-has-spoken attitude

American author Grace Speare once wrote, "Welcome every problem as an opportunity. Each moment is the great challenge, the best thing that ever happened to you. The more difficult the problem, the greater the challenge in working it out."

After reading the many newspaper articles, editorials and letters to the editor, no one can doubt that the Livonia school district is faced with serious problems. In this regard, it is unfortunate that the board of education decided to limit its perception of the district's problems and rush to adopt its own self-interested solutions. Even worse is the board's decision to take on an "Oz-has-spoken!" attitude and stymie all debate on the matter.

The school district would be much better served if the board would realize the opportunities that could be gained by approaching the challenge with a perspective like, "There's no place like home."

Livonia is a wonderful place to live. It became, and remains, a great place to live because of its talented, resourceful and industrious residents. The outstanding caliber of Livonia's residents is exhibited by the people who have organized under the banner of Citizens For Livonia's Future (CFLF).

Being motivated by only the desire to provide the best educational experience for their children, in a few short months this group has developed a capable leadership team, a communication network, a social organization, a legal defense structure and a growing number of volunteers and supporters. It's astounding how much this group has accomplished, and continues to achieve, with only a strong sense of determination and the financial generosity of its supporters.

In light of the resourcefulness of the CFLF parents and grandparents, together with the fact that the current and a former mayor of Livonia have aligned with the group, I find it incredible that the board would rather deny the existence of CFLF instead of opening a meaningful dialogue. I truly believe that, by having the entire community working together on our school district's problems, we would realize an opportunity to develop a school system that would likely exceed any one group's expectations.

Gary Evanko
Livonia

School board not the problem

I believe in the many freedoms that we in the United States are fortunate enough to enjoy. In my opinion, freedom of speech is one of the most precious.

I am happy to see that when people don't agree with the board of education's decisions that they will attend board meetings to voice their concerns and make their voices heard. As taxpayers and parents, I feel it is our right to have our questions answered and our concerns addressed by those who are making the decisions regarding the education of our children. I have always felt that our board of education has given the parents and residents of Livonia its full consideration in the actions it takes.

The Legacy Initiative did not happen overnight. Lansing and the federal government for many years have not been funding public education adequately. Dr. Liepa has had to deal with that situation while striving to maintain the quality education that Livonia residents have come to expect. For the last two years, Dr. Liepa has advertised his intentions in district-wide publications that he was interested in hearing from the entire community regarding the future of our children's education and repeatedly invited all citizens to join in the initial formulation of the Legacy Initiative.

Unfortunately, the group of people who took it upon themselves to file a lawsuit against the board of education are ultimately harming their own children by forcing the school district to expend funds defending its actions at a time when every penny counts in educating our children.

I would like to urge those citizens who are exercising their constitutional rights to undermine our superintendent and board of education's efforts to instead focus their energy in contacting our senator and state representatives. They are the ones who are not adequately funding our children's public education. They are the people who should be held accountable for forcing our district to take the current measures necessary to maintain adequate public education in Livonia.

Cecelia A. Bushery
Livonia

SHARE YOUR OPINIONS

We welcome your letters to the editor. Please include your name, address and phone number for verification. We ask that your letters be 400 words or less. We may edit for clarity, space and content.

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WESTLAND Observer

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| | |
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| Hugh Gallagher Managing Editor | Peter Neill General Manager |
| Susan Rosiek Executive Editor | Richard Aginian President /Publisher |

Our fundamental purposes are to enhance the lives of our readers, nurture the hometowns we serve and contribute to the business success of our customers.

QUOTABLE

"This is like a house and we want them to feel they can do anything here that they can do in their house."

— Home manager Misty Fae, about the children's wing at the Rose F. Kennedy Respite Center in Westland

Our education system must adapt to changing realities

I paid for my college education bending, welding and assembling Mustangs at the world's largest industrial complex, the Ford Rouge plant, in the late 1970s. Long before robots and technology hit the factory floor, it was dirty, back-breaking work. It was also a dark time for the U.S. auto industry as foreign companies were producing higher-quality cars at a lower price and drastically cutting into the domestic auto makers' market share and profits. American factories were being shut down and workers were being laid off. Families were fleeing the state and bumper stickers proclaimed, "The last person to leave Michigan — please shut off the lights."

Fast-forward a quarter of a century and, as Yogi Berra said, it is "déjà vu" all over again.

Michigan's unemployment rate rivals the hurricane-ravaged states of Mississippi and Louisiana. The words Delphi, GM and Ford conjure up images of layoffs and fear, not quality and jobs. The initial response from the auto industry to change and competition was classic:

denial, blame, scape-goating, protectionism and, finally, acceptance of the problem and the development of appropriate strategic responses. The auto industry made changes and was more competitive in the late '80s and '90s.

History has clearly documented what happens to industries and individuals that foolishly attempt to deny and resist change. With global competition and technological advances, the auto industry, along with the rest of Michigan, is facing a rapidly changing, disruptive world that will continue to defy predictability. We are living in a world where ideas and work easily flow across the globe.

Our public school system is at a similar crossroads and is winding through the classic response of denial, blame, scape-goating and protectionism. Without vision, innovation and productive change, our public schools will perish.

Public education in America represents the true Statue of Liberty, taking students from all backgrounds and giving them hope, skills, knowledge and opportunity for a bright future. Yet public education must adapt to the changing world by seeking ways to liberate educators and learners from the industrial model of the past. This model chains students to a six-hour school day that is structured within the confines of a classroom or school building, when learning has become a multi-dimensional experience, where knowledge is available anytime and any place.

We need to ask if our laws, policies, procedures and practices support the knowledge-age economy that our children are entering. Do they encourage and reward the digital revolution, boost technological innovation, enhance students' and workers' skills and promote agile

entrepreneurship and lifelong learning? Can we afford multiple small school districts with duplicative administrative costs? Can we afford not to address the legacy costs of health care and pensions that will continue to absorb any new investment the Legislature and governor commit to our schools? Is our system of education organized and structured to survive and thrive in the 21st century?

The expectation of today's student and employer is that learning will be more relevant and real. What would a 21st century educational environment look like with imagination, innovation and creativity that incorporates 21st century technology?

- Imagine:
- A time when all students have access to the best learning institutions in the world.
 - A time when state policy makers set rigorous academic standards and provide strong accountability for success.
 - Knowledge is gained in a network of learners connected country to country, school to school and student to student.
 - A time when our children, via the Internet and e-learning, can learn about children of China, India and Russia and also learn with them.

Today, faced with competition and global tides, the auto industry is once again forced to change or perish. So too must our schools.

Our collective quest must be to make these new global realities work for and not against us.

We are living in a world where the undereducated and uneducated will be left behind. The global economy rewards brainpower; regardless of its source, origin or geographical location.

The state and nation that adapts to change and invests in its people through quality education will be the most prosperous. It must be our collective goal to make Michigan that state and America that nation.

Our biggest fear should not be the outsourcing of jobs to China. Our greatest fear should be that the Chinese system of education is on steroids and producing more scientists, engineers and mathematicians, technology and other knowledge workers than we are.

Memorization and assembly line learning must give way to imagination, innovation and creativity. This is where the future of Michigan and America lie.

As Yogi Berra said: "The future ain't what it used to be."

We need to imagine the possibilities with a great sense of urgency.

Tom Watkins is a former Michigan state superintendent of schools. His report, The New Education (R)evolution, has gained national and international attention. The report can be found at www.nacol.org. He can be reached at tdwatkins@aol.com.



Tom Watkins

Wellinger plea deal made sense in senseless case

Walking into the Oakland County Circuit Court to report the latest in the Thomas Wellinger case — knowing an entire community was waiting to hear the outcome — I admit, I had mixed feelings.

Word had spread that the case was likely going to end in a plea agreement between Wellinger, his attorney and the prosecution.

This turned out to be true, and Wellinger, a 49-year-old Farmington Hills man who plowed his SUV into the car driven by Judith Weinstein on May 3, 2005, avoided

a trial via the plea bargain. He pleaded "no contest" to three counts of second-degree murder and faces 19-30 years in prison. The three counts of operating under the influence of liquor, causing death, were dropped.

At first, I thought this was too good of a deal for someone who drank enough alcohol to register a 0.43 blood-alcohol content at the time of the 3:30 p.m. crash. I have never in my years of reporting heard of such a high blood-alcohol level. The fact that a mother and her two young sons were killed as a result — it seemed to me that 19-30 years wasn't enough.

Then, I considered the alternative. Sometimes, as a reporter, I have to put myself in the shoes of others — of those who are the subject of my stories.

My first clue that the agreement was satisfactory was that Gary Weinstein thought it was a fair deal.

You see, if the agreement was rejected, the Weinstein family and the Wellinger family would have been dragged through every graphic detail of the horrible crash, not to mention the aftermath. I cannot imagine having to go through that myself.

So, by the time the crowded courtroom cleared out, I had a better understanding of it all. I sat near a man who remained silent through the proceedings while facing the man who took the lives of his wife and sons. I saw relatives of Wellinger who were obviously heartbroken. I saw family friends who were somber and supportive of Mr. Weinstein. And I knew it would only be worse if the case went to trial.

But that's not the only reason it ended in a plea agreement — the maximum sentence would have been life in prison if Wellinger was found guilty after a trial. As it stands, he will be approaching 70 years of age if he gets out of prison after 19 years. And he will

never be allowed to drive a vehicle for the rest of his life, per the agreement. But there was one good thing that could have happened from a trial. A whole lot of nagging questions would have been answered. As a reporter, unanswered questions are irritating. But what's more is that the community may never know what led to this tragedy. The whereabouts of Wellinger and his alcohol consumption that day remain vague. People in his life that day who saw him drinking or who could have stopped him from getting into his SUV that afternoon remain anonymous. In my opinion, they remain cowards for not speaking up at the time or even after the fact.

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I may never get the answers I think the community wants to conclude this story, but the good news is that the Weinstein family may get some closure from the final condition of the plea agreement.

Wellinger agreed to be interviewed by the Weinstein family or a representative, within six months of his April 26 sentencing. I, myself, am not counting on much, in the way of answers, but I hope the family will get at least a little information to piece it all together, even if it makes no sense to anyone. After all, it was a senseless tragedy to begin with.

Stacy Jenkins is editor of the Farmington Observer. She can be reached at (734) 953-2131 or via e-mail at sjenkins@hometownlife.com.



Stacy Jenkins

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Aginian caps newspaper career with no regrets

Richard Aginian said he will have no regrets when he walks out of his office Friday, capping a 30-year career in community newspapers.

"Dick Aginian leaves a legacy of strong community newspapers, not only at the *Observer & Eccentric*, but at all the former HomeTown products he touched as chief executive officer," said Peter Neill, vice president and general manager of the O&E.

"In the *Observer & Eccentric* market he is a community leader who worked tirelessly, not only for his newspapers, but for the community as a whole. Dick's influence stretched far outside southeast Michigan and his national contribution to our business was rightfully recognized last year when Suburban Newspapers of America awarded him the Dean Leshar award for his contributions to the industry," added Neill.

Aginian spent his entire newspaper career working for Philip Power as president and CEO of HomeTown Communications Network until the chain was sold to the Gannett Corp. in April 2005. Since then, he has served as president and publisher for the *Observer & Eccentric* and *Mirror Newspapers* groups.

"I am not viewing this as a retirement, but rather as an opportunity to do something else," he said. "Just not 60 hours a week."

Aginian said he started out with Power as the "finance guy," but decided to stay with the organization when he was given free rein to run the company.

"My goal all along was to either own or run my own business," he said. "I started as the controller and then went from there."

TEAMWORK

It proved to be a mutually beneficial partnership.

"Dick Aginian has been one of the giants of the community newspaper industry," Power said. "As CEO of HomeTown Communications Network, over many years he helped lead the organization to the absolute forefront of our industry. He understood with perfect clarity both the essential role hometown newspapers have in the everyday life of readers in their own communities and the requirements of solid business management in the success of the company. He excelled in both."

"Smart, thoughtful, ethical, blessed with an outstanding work ethic, Dick Aginian set the standards for what a top manager should be," Power added. "I learned an enormous amount from him every day we worked together. I'm delighted he has chosen to retire when at the absolute top of his game."

Under Aginian's leadership, HomeTown Communications grew to include weekly news-



Dick Aginian will retire Friday after 30 years in the community newspaper business.

papers in Ohio and northern Kentucky, a daily newspaper in Livingston County, and telephone books throughout the state of Michigan.

"I would say moving into Livingston, and starting and then expanding the phone books, were two significant accomplishments for the company," he said. "Looking back, there were some other things we should have done that we didn't, but you don't dwell on the past."

INDUSTRY KUDOS

Aginian's professional accomplishments were made apparent last summer when he was named winner of the 2005 Dean Leshar Award.

The award, presented by the Suburban Newspapers of America, recognizes senior level executives who have pioneered new concepts in suburban and community newspaper publishing, provided civic leadership to the communities they serve, enhanced the industry through leadership and produced outstanding newspapers, all representing a lifetime of achievement.

Aginian was nominated by Charles Lyons, chief executive officer of Post-Newsweek Media, who in his letter said Aginian "launched one of the most successful suburban newspaper networks in the country before it was popular to do so. He has committed countless hours to the industry and community organizations."

And while it will be strange not to head to the office Monday morning, Aginian said he plans to stay plenty busy continuing to serve the many civic and nonprofit organizations he has held leadership roles in over the years, spending more time traveling with his wife, Diane, and once the weather warms, lowering his handicap at his home course, the Oakland Hills Country Club.

Aginian said he plans to stay in Birmingham, and hinted a run at public office may be in the future.

"Birmingham is a great town, and if there is a way I can help keep it that way by running for elected office in the city, then it is always a possibility," he said.

RICHARD D. AGINIAN

■ **Hometown:** Birmingham

■ **Personal:** Married to Diane. Two daughters, Dawn and Maria.

■ **Education:** Ph.B., Wayne State University; M.B.A., Rutgers University.

■ **Professional accomplishments:** CPA; 1977-2005, president and CEO HomeTown Communications Network Inc.; 1976-77, treasurer, Suburban Communications Corp.; 1975-76, assistant to president, Flavey Motors of Troy; 1964-75 audit manager, Arthur Andersen & Co.

■ **Associations:** 2003-present, Board of Directors, YMCA

Foundation member, Investment Committee; 2001-present, Board of Directors, Certified Audit of Circulation; 2000-present, trustee, William Beaumont Hospital; member Investment Committee, member Audit Committee; 1999-2004, executive vice chairman, 35th Ryder Cup, Oakland Hills Country Club; 1996-present, Board of Directors, Metropolitan YMCA; 1991-present, Board of Directors/trustee, Corporation for a Skilled Workforce; 1985-present, Board of Directors/trustee, Walsh College, chairman finance and investment committees, member, Audit Committee; Michigan Association of Certified Public Accountants; Board of Directors, Organization, Adcraft Club of Detroit; Oakland Hills Country Club

■ **Awards:** 2001, Paul Harris Fellow Award, Bloomfield Hills Rotary Club; 2001, Community Service Award The Community House; 2000, Children's Coalition - Media Merry-Go-Round Award; 1998, Community Service Award, Birmingham-Bloomfield Symphony

Superstar, 1995, volunteer of the Year on behalf of The Community House in Birmingham, from the National Society of Fund Raising Executives.

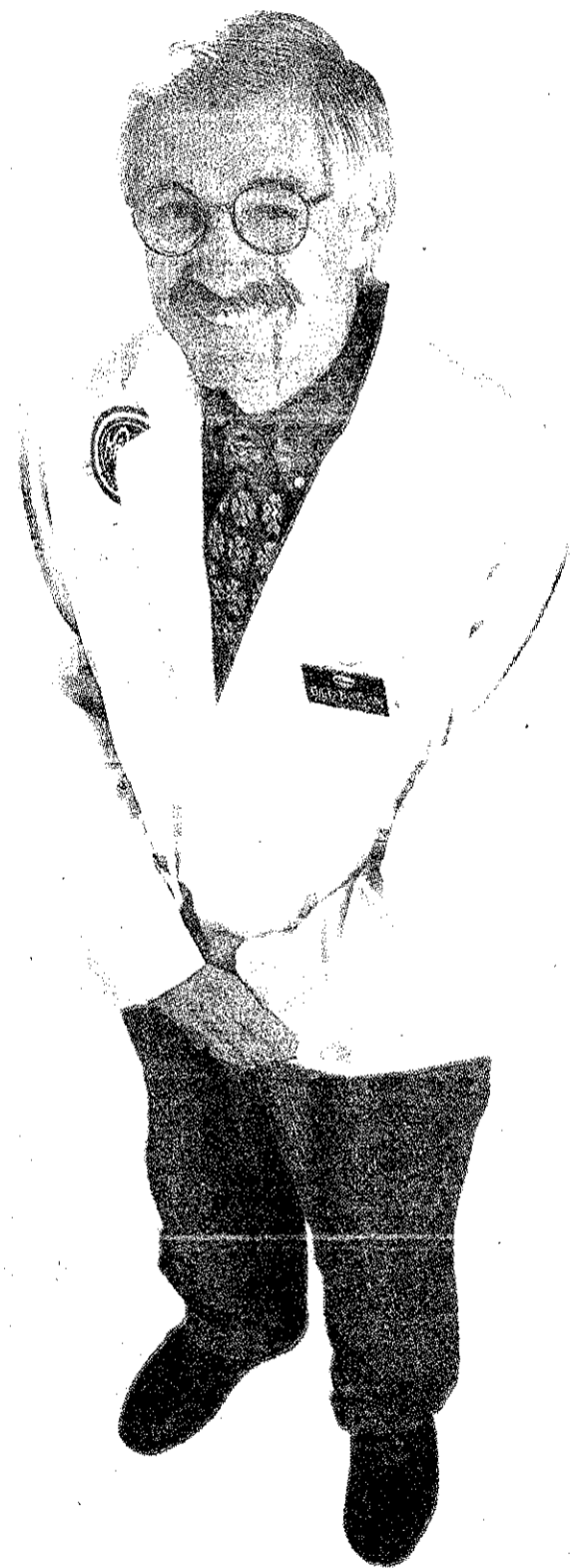
■ **Past civic/professional involvement:** 2003, president, Oakland Hills Country Club; 1993-95, president, The Community House; 1985-86, president, Suburban Newspapers of America; 1982-89, Board of Directors, Michigan Press Association.



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